



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
WATER RESOURCES COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes for April 12, 2001

Members in Attendance:

Mark P. Smith	Designee, EOEa
Richard Thibedeau	Designee, DEM
Mark Tisa	Designee, DFWELE
Marilyn Contreas	Designee, DHCD
Glenn Haas	Designee, DEP
Ron Sharpin	Designee, MDC
Joe Pelczarski,	Designee, CZM
Lee Corte-Real	Designee, DFA
Richard Butler	Public Member
Dave Rich	Public Member

Others in Attendance:

Linda Marler	DEM
Mike Gildesgame	DEM
Eric Carlson	DEM
Chris Hardy	Mass Audubon
Michele Drury	DEM
Lorraine Downey	MWRA
Laura Harrahy	NepRWA
Jackie Murphy	EOEA
Lou Wagner	MAS

Agenda Item #1: Executive Director's Report

- Smith provided an update of the State of the Environment report. This report was released last week. There is a special watershed section and the report is printed on recycled paper.
- The public hearings on the Foxborough IBT application were held. They were sparsely attended. Staff received testimony from town officials in support of the application and will bring a Staff Recommendation to the WRC in May.
- Mansfield has developed monitoring plan as directed under their IBT approval and the town was issued a Water Management permit. This was an important interagency collaboration.
- Following up on the Determination of Insignificance for Hopkinton to purchase water from Ashland, DEM is developing an Operation & Management Plan for the reservoir. DEM had concerns that this withdrawal could impact operations of the reservoir for recreation and flood control. We may have presentation concerning this at a future meeting.

- We have been invited to RI to discuss our drought plan. Their drought plan will be very similar to ours.
- Gildesgame stated that there have been a low number of applicants for the ACOE program of technical assistance to states. Any suggestions on how to get more applicants will be appreciated. Smith suggested a flier that is easier to understand. Contreas suggested sending the flyer to MMA. Another suggestion was RPA director's meeting.

Marler provided an update on the hydrologic conditions.

- We received a lot of snow and rain in March: 8.3 inches statewide (200% of normal for the month). There was a big snowstorm during the week of 5th and heavy rains on the 22nd & 30th. The rains fell mainly in the eastern part of state, but the western part is still above normal (6-7 inches) as well. The southeast averaged 11.4 inches (New Bedford received 13.7 inches). The precipitation deficit has been eliminated in northeast and southeast regions and in the composite state totals. There are still deficits in the central, Connecticut Valley and western regions of the state, but overall the Water Year precipitation is above 90% overall, and in some regions, above 100%. We are optimistic for the rest of the year. There was some flooding in some parts of the state in March.
- Snow pack has receded. Warm temperatures are expected over the weekend, so the snow pack will recede some more. This has caused recession of streamflow in eastern Massachusetts. Streamflows in western Massachusetts are rising because the snow pack is still melting there. We are starting to get meltdown from NH & VT. Flood warnings have been issued in the western part of state.
- Groundwater levels: Cape Cod is still below normal; the northeast and southeast regions are above normal. USGS expects that the Cape will see rising groundwater levels in response to the March rains. The water table on the Cape is deep, 50 ft below the ground surface. They expect significant gains. USGS reported record high groundwater levels in Chelmsford, Georgetown, and Norfolk.
- Streamflow for March: the Northeast region experienced floods and above normal streamflows; the western region had below normal streamflows because they didn't have the snow melt, but this will probably be reversed in April once the snow pack melts. The USGS posted flood recurrence intervals of 5 to 10 years for Eastern Massachusetts. The recurrence interval was a 50 year flood on the Ipswich and Aberjona Rivers. A 20-year event was recorded at the Parker River in Byfield. There were record high flows on the river last month due to the rain.
- River flow is at 250 % of median
- Water supply reservoirs are full to overflowing.
- Drought indices: We are not in a drought. The Palmer Drought Index out to June shows us as "very moist". The Climate Prediction Center expects that through summer we will have normal temperatures and normal precipitation.
- Water Year composite: We were very much below normal in February, but now we are in good shape.

Agenda Item #2: Vote on the Minutes of August 10, 2000

V O T E	Butler moved with a second by Corte-Real to accept the minutes of August 10, 2000.
	The vote in favor was unanimous of those present, with one abstention.

Agenda Item #3: Presentation on the Water Conservation Bill

Wagner introduced Chris Hardy, the Mass. Audubon legislative liaison, and then updated the WRC on a bill that is currently before the legislature. In 1997, a dry year, the Ipswich River dried up. That summer, the Ipswich River Watershed Association conducted a tour for the legislators in watershed. Senator Tarr and Representative Petersen attended. The first stop was in the upper reaches, where the river was dry. Next to the river bed was an industrial park with large green lawns being watered. This helped to emphasize the reasons for the plight of the river. Not long after the tour, Sen. Tarr contacted Jack Clark, the director of advocacy for Mass Audubon, to ask for help in drafting a bill to help address these problems. The result is the current bill.

The centerpiece of the bill is a water conservation program which will provide technical assistance and money to fund water conservation measures within communities. These types of programs have been implemented in other parts of the country and have resulted in 10-20% reductions in water use. A study by AWWA compared households that conserve water with non-conserving households. The results show that there is a substantial ability to save water and reduce indoor per capita household water use from 70 gpcd to 50 gpcd through water conservation measures. These are the types of programs this bill would provide technical and funding support for. To provide the technical support, it would fund a position of state water conservation coordinator. This was proposed with the state water conservation standards in 1992. Other elements would fund a comprehensive study of water resource laws, regulations, and policies in state and make recommendations to the legislature regarding any changes and modifications that might be needed to support biologic integrity and to make sure we have enough water for public health and safety and economic needs.

The bill would also fund the development of methodologies to determine how much water should be left in streams to support biological communities and give direction to water withdrawers on what information they need to provide to determine how much water they can take without causing significant biological harm.

This was originally proposed as a \$10 million grant program. As it was developed, it was suggested that this be rolled into State Revolving Fund program (this would help it continue long-term).

The bill says that until methods can be developed, IBT and WMA decision will be based on site-specific information or Aquatic Base Flow. The bill provides for a pilot program in the Ipswich River watershed for water conservation programs. Sen. Tarr offered this amendment himself. There is a federal bill as well (an amendment to the federal Water Pollution Control Act) that is similar, authorizing water conservation programs using SRF.

Tisa noted that the bill mentions DEP and DEM prominently. He asked if the agencies supported the bill. Smith replied that EOEa and the agencies have not taken a position on the bill. If we were to provide testimony, we would make some changes. Tisa asked if this bill provides authorization for programs that already exist. The items outlined in the bill, he said, seem to be things that we do now. Gildesgame replied that these are the kind of things that it is appropriate for WRC to oversee. Butler asked where the bill stood now. Hardy replied that it was in the Natural Resources Committee. There is widespread bi-partisan support, but money is the main stumbling block. Rich stated that he didn't question need for water conservation, but he was uneasy about a bill to address issues in the Ipswich River applying statewide. He agreed with Smith that there are some things in the bill that need to be cleared up. Rich stated that he was not sure of MWWA's position on the bill.

Smith encouraged people and agencies to follow up individually.

Agenda Item #4: Report on Flooding in Eastern Massachusetts

Carlson distributed some tables with flood data. The Flood Hazard Management Program in DEM is funded by FEMA to coordinate the National Flood Insurance Program in Massachusetts. The program doesn't usually get involved with disaster response, but rather does long-term planning in flood prone areas and assures compliance with floodplain construction standards.

The March 5-9th snowstorm was expected to result in severe coastal area flooding. It was an intense storm, but coastal damage was minor. The following week, FHMP staff met with MEMA and the National Weather Service to discuss the potential for flooding due to snow melt. There was a lot of water in the snow pack (twice as much as normal). On the 22nd, flood watches and warnings were posted in a number of communities and rivers, including but not limited to: the Assabet, Blackstone, Charles, Concord, Nashua, Neponset, Shawsheen and Sudbury. Flooding resulted and communities activated emergency centers, shelters, and evacuated low lying areas. Some of the areas affected were north of Boston, Quincy and Taunton. The Weather Service had said that two rain storms would cause flooding. We had flooding after first. Another rainstorm occurred the next week with the potential to cause as much flooding as the first, but it didn't turn out quite so bad. Most rivers in Massachusetts peaked on or around the first storm. The recurrence interval for these storms was under a 100-year flood event.

Flood insurance claims, not necessarily from these two storms, were made by several communities, listed on the handouts. As of Tuesday, there is a Federal disaster declaration in effect for the flooding this month. This is an individual assistance declaration for private property. They are working on getting a declaration for public property (bridges, etc). The declaration also allows money to go for hazard mitigation grants, administered by the FHMP program. We don't know how much this will be yet.

Agenda Item #5: Vote on Lawn Watering Guidance

Smith stated that the vote would be postponed but asked Murphy for an update. Murphy said the document had received a high level of interest from NEWWA and team leaders. They want the

opportunity to comment. Staff thought it would be best to have their comments before a vote. Murphy called attention to changes made in response to comments received last month, and in response, a section was added on private wells. A discussion on conservation rate structures has been added, as well as an appendix on developing these rate structures. Staff is revising the Lawn Watering Policy and want to send it to NEWWA and the task force for their comment. At the next meeting the WRC will be asked to approve this guidance. We will work a bit on the lawn watering policy to figure out what it means for DEP permitting before sending it out for public comment. The comment period on the guidance ends Apr 23rd.

Murphy gave a presentation on the guidance last week to NEWWA. It was well received. The audience suggested that Staff develop some outreach and education once the guidance is out. They want to work with us on the development of the policy. Murphy will be teaching course on this in conjunction with DEP, NEWWA, MWWA etc.

Rich said the feedback he heard from NEWWA members was that Murphy's presentation was great and suggested that Murphy contact Carol Harris of MWWA for comment on this. Contreas distributed an article on the social history of the lawn (The Tyranny of the Lawn).

Agenda Item #6: Discussion of Application Information Required for Certain Small Wastewater Interbasin Transfers

Smith said many communities are under court order to build wastewater systems in their towns as wastewater problems in these towns are causing real public health and safety problems. . Some of these may trigger the Interbasin Transfer Act, and Staff is looking at how the Act applies. Drury added these projects have strict timetables. Most have looked at alternatives and assessed impacts, and some preferred alternatives trigger the Act. Drury said she has been finding out the types of information they've provided to other agencies and has been reviewing this information to see if and how it addresses ITA issues. DEM legal counsel also has been brought in regarding the possibility of waiving certain requirements under the Act. At this point, these discussions are preliminary because we don't know what is appropriate at this point, and we don't want to make a community miss a court ordered deadline. At the same time we want to make sure we fulfill the requirements of the ITA. It may be a matter of requiring them to "fill out a form" or using existing information.

Tisa stated that we have to make sure we are consistent with how we apply the Act for precedent purposes.

Meeting adjourned

Minutes approved 8/14/03